



# Virginia's Small Animal Feeding Operations Evaluation and Assessment Strategy

## Background

The Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are working together to implement procedures for operators of small animal feeding operations to help improve water quality.

DEQ and VDACS have collaborated on the development of this strategy by which small animal feeding operations (AFOs) will be evaluated for site-specific risks or impacts to water quality. It is the agencies' intention to be flexible when addressing these concerns. This strategy complements the regulatory Animal Waste Program of DEQ and the complaint-based Agriculture Stewardship Act Program of VDACS.

## What is an animal feeding operation?

An animal feeding operation (AFO) is a lot or facility where these conditions are met:

- Animals (other than aquatic animals) are stabled or confined, and fed or maintained, for 45 days or more in any 12-month period, and
- Crops, vegetation, forage growth or post-harvest residues are not sustained in the normal growing season over any portion of the facility.

AFOs that confine more than 300 animal units of livestock and handle liquid manure are required to obtain coverage under a Virginia Pollution Abatement general permit. Poultry AFOs that confine more than 200 animal units (20,000 chickens or 11,000 turkeys) must register for coverage under the VPA regulation and general permit for poultry waste management.

AFOs classified as "small" are operations that fall below the animal numbers that require a VPA permit. There are about 800 small dairy and poultry AFOs in Virginia.

## Purpose of the strategy

The strategy establishes procedures that will be used to identify, evaluate and assess small AFOs for any risks or impacts to water quality that the operation may generate, and to address those concerns. It also details the criteria by which decisions will be made regarding the evaluation and assessment of the AFOs, the appropriate corrective measures to address concerns that are identified, and the ultimate resolution of the water quality issues.

## Operation self-assessment tool

DEQ and VDACS will be piloting the use of a self-assessment tool that can assist facility operators in determining whether the facility is an AFO, and to allow the operator to begin planning adjustments that will minimize or eliminate impacts before an on-site assessment is scheduled. Operators are encouraged to contact DEQ or VDACS representatives regarding self-assessment.

## On-Site assessments

DEQ Animal Waste Program staff will perform the onsite assessments with periodic assistance from VDACS. The agencies' staff will confer before conducting an assessment.

## Need for additional measures

When an on-site assessment concludes that there are water quality risks or impacts related to the AFO, the agencies' staff will make a determination of whether corrective action is needed. If it is determined that VDACS is the appropriate agency to address the required measures, the case will be referred to VDACS.

## Site-specific water quality concerns

Following each individual onsite assessment where water quality risks or impacts are found, the most appropriate remedy to solve environmental issues will be used. The agencies' staff will confer before making any determinations about which measures and options are best-suited for the operation. Options to address the water quality concerns will be discussed with the operator of the AFO before a decision is made.

## Appropriate measures

Examples of measures that could be used to address site-specific water quality concerns include:

- Changing a practice, such as:
  - Moving a livestock feeding area away from surface waters.
  - Relocating manure or nutrient stockpiles that are stored outside and adjacent to surface waters.
- Implementing a best management practice, such as:
  - Installing a fence to exclude livestock from surface waters, and creating a vegetated buffer to filter nutrients and sediment.
  - Improving nutrient management practices.

## For more information

Small AFO Strategy Website:

[www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/LandApplicationBeneficialReuse/LivestockPoultry.aspx](http://www.deq.virginia.gov/Programs/Water/LandApplicationBeneficialReuse/LivestockPoultry.aspx)

DEQ Offices	Lead Contact	Email address	Contact Number
Central Office – Richmond	Betsy Bowles	<a href="mailto:Betsy.Bowles@deq.virginia.gov">Betsy.Bowles@deq.virginia.gov</a>	804-698-4059
Blue Ridge Region – Roanoke	Jim Scott	<a href="mailto:James.Scott@deq.virginia.gov">James.Scott@deq.virginia.gov</a>	540-562-6827
Northern Virginia Region – Woodbridge	Joe Garner	<a href="mailto:Joseph.Garner@deq.virginia.gov">Joseph.Garner@deq.virginia.gov</a>	703-583-3938
	John Thompson	<a href="mailto:John.Thompson@deq.virginia.gov">John.Thompson@deq.virginia.gov</a>	703-583-3876
Piedmont Region – Henrico	Kyle Winter	<a href="mailto:Kyle.Winter@deq.virginia.gov">Kyle.Winter@deq.virginia.gov</a>	804-527-5052
Southwest Region – Abingdon	Willard Keene	<a href="mailto:Willard.Keene@deq.virginia.gov">Willard.Keene@deq.virginia.gov</a>	276-676-4847
Tidewater Region – Virginia Beach	Roger Everton	<a href="mailto:Roger.Everton@deq.virginia.gov">Roger.Everton@deq.virginia.gov</a>	757-518-2150
Valley Region – Harrisonburg	Gary Flory	<a href="mailto:Gary.Flory@deq.virginia.gov">Gary.Flory@deq.virginia.gov</a>	540-574-7840

VDACS Offices	Lead Contact	Email address	Contact Number
Central/Eastern Region – Richmond	Darrell Marshall	<a href="mailto:Darrell.Marshall@vdacs.virginia.gov">Darrell.Marshall@vdacs.virginia.gov</a>	804-786-2658
Valley Region – Harrisonburg	Tim Higgs	<a href="mailto:Tim.Higgs@vdacs.virginia.gov">Tim.Higgs@vdacs.virginia.gov</a>	540-209-9135
Southwest Region – Lynchburg	Greg Barts	<a href="mailto:Gregory.Barts@vdacs.virginia.gov">Gregory.Barts@vdacs.virginia.gov</a>	434-200-9985